

# Chapter 1

## Demographics









# Demographics

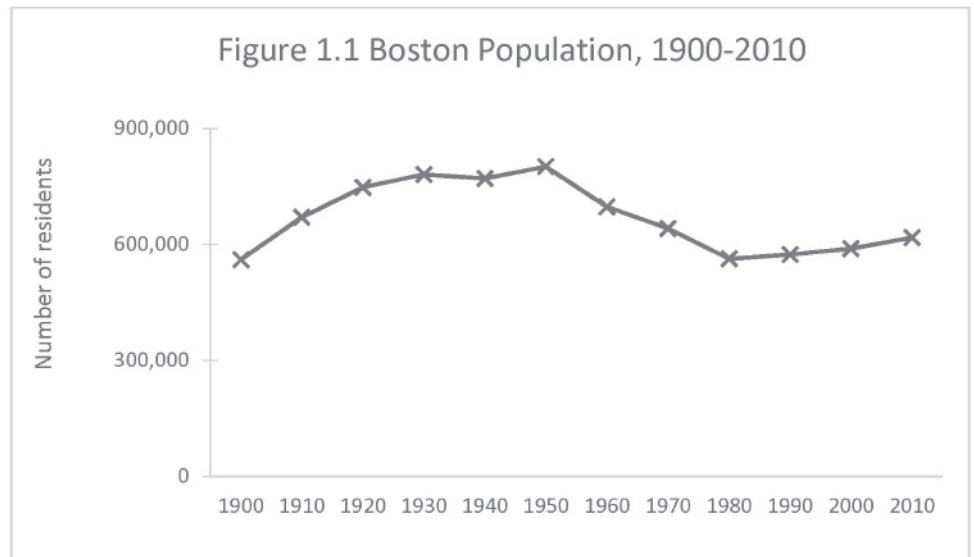
Boston's population has grown in the last decade. Much of this change can be attributed to local and state policies that have created a strong and well-balanced economy and supported neighborhood redevelopment (1). With its many colleges and universities, Boston is especially appealing to young and well-educated people from around the world. In 2015, 27% of the Boston population was foreign-born compared with only 15% of the Massachusetts population and 13% of the entire population of the United States (2).

Understanding the characteristics of Boston's population can help identify those vulnerable to poor health outcomes. For instance, it is well established that language access is crucial to providing basic human services, including health care (3). Thirteen percent of Boston households were linguistically isolated, meaning all members over the age of 14 had some difficulty speaking English (2). This group may be unable to receive needed services to stay safe and healthy. Health care and public health systems must address the language needs of vulnerable populations in order to ensure optimal health for all.

Although Boston is a racially and ethnically diverse city in which less than half of its residents are White, Boston was ranked among the top 20th percentile of highly segregated metropolitan areas in the United States in 2010, alongside Cincinnati, Ohio and Birmingham, Alabama (4). Racial residential segregation refers to the degree to which two or more racial/ethnic groups live separately from one another in a geographic area (3). Segregation affects health by creating different economic, physical, and social environments that shape the health behaviors and choices individuals make (5-7). Evidence suggests that segregation of people of color into poor, less resourced neighborhoods is associated with increased adult mortality (6, 8). In order to understand social factors that influence health, health indicators in this report are stratified by race and individual socioeconomic (SES) indicators, and presented geographically by neighborhood or census tract within maps.

Understanding the age structure of a population helps forecast social service and health care needs. In 2015, 15% of Boston residents were 60 or older; by 2030 it is projected that about 20% of Boston's population will be comprised of older adults (9). At the younger end of the age spectrum, demographic characteristics for children and adolescents differ from the rest of the Boston population. Black children make up the highest proportion of youth under the age of 18, whereas White individuals make up the largest proportion of all residents. In this report, we give special attention to the subpopulation of Boston youth for whom many of Boston's programs and policies are designed to support and protect.

In 2010, Boston had 617,591 residents, making it the most populous city in Massachusetts. Data from the decennial censuses demonstrate that the population of Boston has varied dramatically over the past 110 years, reaching a high point of 801,444 residents in 1950. The population of Boston increased 5% between 2000 and 2010.



DATA SOURCE: Decennial Censuses 1900-2010, U.S. Census Bureau

Between 2000 and 2010, the percentage of Asian and Latino residents increased while the percentage of Black and White residents decreased.



(1) Includes American Indians/Alaskan Natives and individuals who identify as some other race

DATA SOURCE: Decennial Censuses 2000 and 2010, U.S. Census Bureau





The population of Boston has become increasingly diverse over time. While 50% of Boston residents were White in 2000, this percentage fell to slightly less than a majority (45%) by 2015. Much of the diversification in the population of Boston is due to an increase in the Latino population relative to the overall population of Boston, which increased from 14% in 2000 to 20% in 2015.

Figure 1.3 Population by Race/Ethnicity and Year

Year	Not Latino					Latino (of any race)
	Asian	Black	Other race <sup>1</sup>	Two or more races	White	
2015	9.5%	22.9%	1.2%	2.3%	44.7%	19.5%
2014	9.7%	22.3%	1.5%	2.2%	45.6%	18.6%
2013	8.9%	22.0%	1.7%	2.7%	45.9%	18.8%
2012	9.1%	23.3%	1.0%	2.0%	46.0%	18.6%
2011	9.1%	22.7%	1.8%	2.1%	46.0%	18.4%
2010	8.9%	22.4%	1.8%	2.4%	47.0%	17.5%
2009	7.5%	21.7%	1.6%	1.7%	51.2%	16.3%
2008	8.2%	21.6%	1.7%	1.5%	50.8%	16.2%
2007	8.6%	21.2%	2.0%	1.5%	49.8%	16.9%
2006	8.0%	23.4%	2.1%	1.4%	50.2%	14.9%
2005	8.7%	23.5%	‡	1.2%	48.6%	14.7%
2000	7.5%	23.8%	1.7%	3.1%	49.5%	14.4%
1990	5.2%	24.0%	1.3%	<sup>2</sup>	59.1%	10.4%
1980	2.7%	21.7%	1.3%	<sup>2</sup>	67.9%	6.4%

‡ Data not presented due to insufficient sample size

<sup>1</sup> Includes American Indians/Alaskan Natives and individuals who identify as some other race

<sup>2</sup> Prior to the 2000 census, data were not collected on whether individuals identified as belonging to two or more races.

NOTE: The 2000 Census was the first to offer respondents the option of identifying as belonging to more than one race. Therefore, census data from before 2000 are not strictly comparable to census data in 2000 and beyond. Nonetheless, these data provide good estimates of the changes in the racial and ethnic composition of Boston.

In addition, verifiable data were not available

DATA SOURCE: Decennial Censuses 1980, 1990, 2000 and 2010, U.S. Census Bureau; American Community Survey, 2005-2015, U.S. Census Bureau



Between 2000 and 2010, the overall population of Boston increased by 5%.

Among neighborhoods, the South End, Roxbury, and Fenway experienced the greatest increases in population (24%, 17%, and 15%, respectively) while Dorchester (zip codes 02122, 02124), Mattapan, and Roslindale experienced the greatest decreases in population (-5%, -8%, and -8%, respectively).

**Figure 1.4 Boston Population by Neighborhood,  
2000 and 2010**

Neighborhood	2000	2010	% change
BOSTON	589,141	617,591	+4.8%
Allston/Brighton	66,467	66,865	+0.6%
Back Bay <sup>1</sup>	46,504	50,017	+7.6%
Charlestown	15,195	16,439	+8.2%
Dorchester (zip codes 02121, 02125)	58,675	59,273	+1.0%
Dorchester (zip codes 02122, 02124)	75,329	71,262	-5.4%
East Boston	38,413	40,508	+5.5%
Fenway	47,449	54,565	+15.0%
Hyde Park	28,392	28,488	+0.3%
Jamaica Plain	36,293	35,401	-2.5%
Mattapan	27,815	25,562	-8.1%
Roslindale	32,527	29,826	-8.3%
Roxbury	34,665	40,527	+16.9%
South Boston	30,048	33,889	+12.8%
South End <sup>2</sup>	27,311	33,881	+24.1%
West Roxbury	24,058	25,861	+7.5%

<sup>1</sup> Includes Beacon Hill, Downtown, the North End, and the West End

<sup>2</sup> Includes the zip code typically used to identify Chinatown (02111)

DATA SOURCE: Decennial Censuses 2000 and 2010, U.S. Census Bureau



Figure 1.5 Boston Population by Neighborhood and Race/Ethnicity (%), 2000 and 2010

Neighborhood	Total population		Asian		Black		Latino		White		Other race <sup>1</sup>		Two or more races	
	2000	2010	2000	2010	2000	2010	2000	2010	2000	2010	2000	2010	2000	2010
	Count	Count	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
BOSTON	589,141	617,591	7.5%	8.9%	23.8%	22.4%	14.4%	17.5%	49.5%	47.0%	1.7%	1.8%	3.1%	2.4%
Allston/Brighton	66,467	66,865	13.7%	15.4%	4.5%	4.6%	9.2%	10.2%	68.6%	65.8%	1.4%	1.7%	2.6%	2.4%
Back Bay <sup>2</sup>	46,504	50,017	9.2%	10.1%	5.1%	4.7%	3.8%	5.2%	80.1%	78.0%	0.4%	0.5%	1.4%	1.6%
Charlestown	15,195	16,439	5.0%	8.2%	3.6%	4.7%	11.6%	9.7%	78.6%	75.8%	0.3%	0.5%	0.9%	1.2%
Dorchester (zip codes 02121, 02125)	58,675	59,273	6.6%	6.6%	47.8%	44.0%	17.5%	22.6%	18.2%	17.1%	4.9%	5.7%	5.2%	3.8%
Dorchester (zip codes 02122, 02124)	75,329	71,262	8.3%	9.8%	46.7%	45.8%	11.8%	14.7%	25.7%	22.7%	3.0%	3.6%	4.5%	3.5%
East Boston	38,413	40,508	4.0%	3.5%	3.1%	3.2%	39.0%	52.9%	49.7%	37.2%	1.3%	1.8%	2.9%	1.5%
Fenway	47,449	54,565	13.6%	17.3%	6.7%	5.8%	8.2%	9.0%	68.1%	64.7%	0.7%	0.5%	2.7%	2.7%
Hyde Park	28,392	28,488	1.6%	1.8%	32.4%	43.3%	13.4%	22.3%	48.8%	29.5%	0.7%	1.0%	3.1%	2.1%
Jamaica Plain	36,293	35,401	5.1%	5.2%	13.9%	12.0%	24.9%	22.6%	52.9%	57.1%	0.6%	0.7%	2.5%	2.5%
Mattapan	27,815	25,562	1.0%	0.9%	81.9%	80.4%	7.1%	11.7%	4.8%	3.8%	0.7%	0.9%	4.5%	2.4%
Roslindale	32,527	29,826	2.6%	2.7%	16.5%	21.3%	20.2%	25.9%	56.8%	47.1%	0.6%	0.9%	3.3%	2.2%
Roxbury	34,665	40,527	3.1%	5.1%	51.1%	41.4%	24.4%	27.0%	13.5%	20.2%	4.0%	3.4%	4.0%	3.0%
South Boston	30,048	33,889	3.9%	4.9%	2.5%	4.6%	7.7%	9.9%	84.3%	78.8%	0.4%	0.5%	1.2%	1.2%
South End <sup>3</sup>	27,311	33,881	19.6%	21.2%	20.2%	15.8%	16.3%	15.5%	40.9%	45.0%	0.7%	0.6%	2.3%	1.9%
West Roxbury	24,058	25,861	4.1%	6.4%	2.1%	5.0%	3.5%	6.8%	88.6%	80.0%	0.4%	0.4%	1.4%	1.5%

<sup>1</sup> Includes American Indians/Alaskan Natives and individuals who identify as some other race<sup>2</sup> Includes Beacon Hill, Downtown, the North End, and the West End<sup>3</sup> Includes the zip code typically used to identify Chinatown (02111)

DATA SOURCE: Decennial Censuses 2000 and 2010, U.S. Census Bureau



Figure 1.6 Boston Population Counts by Neighborhood and Race/Ethnicity, 2000 and 2010

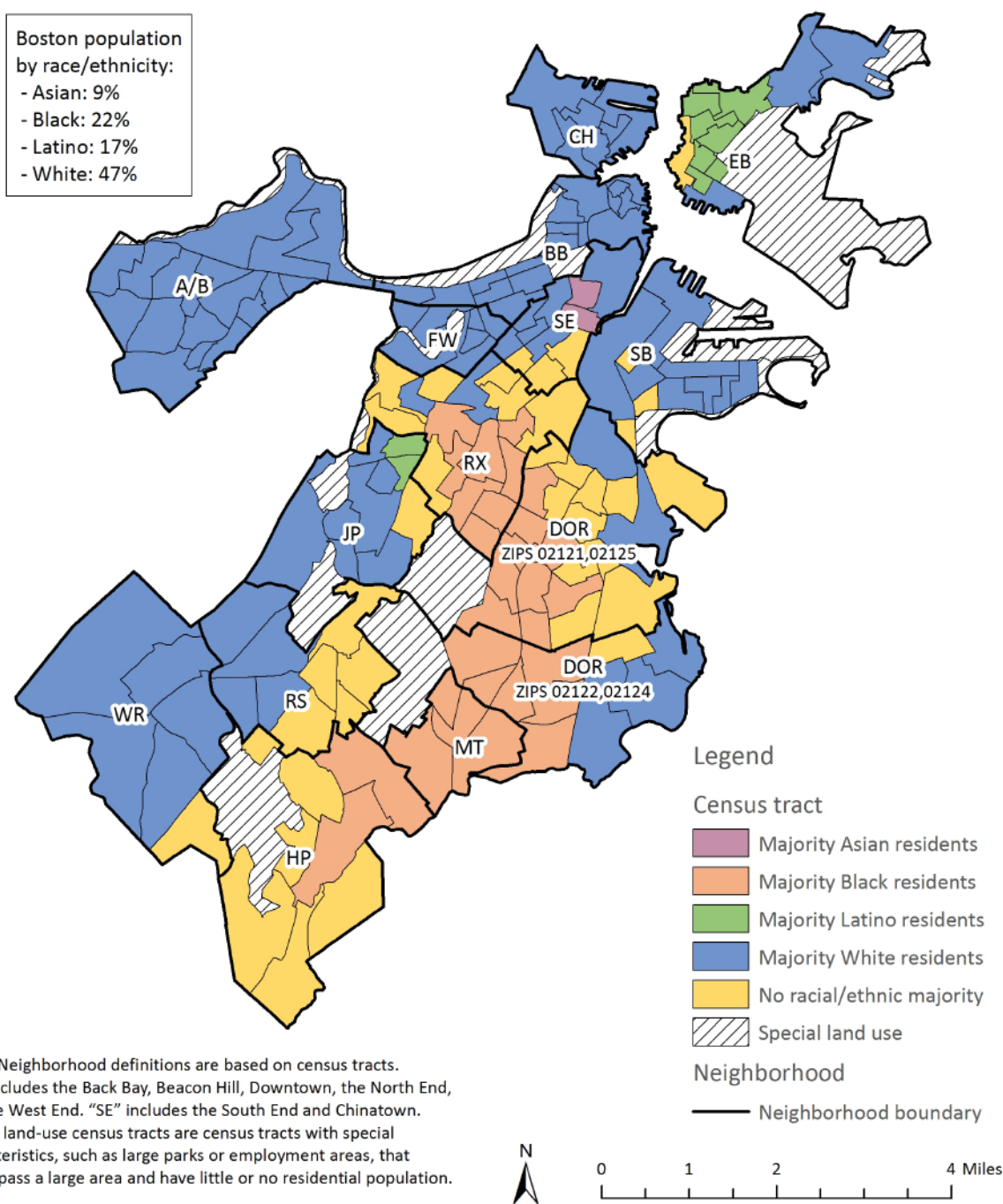
	Asian			Black			Latino			White			Other race <sup>1</sup>			Two or more races		
	2000	2010	% change	2000	2010	% change	2000	2010	% change	2000	2010	% change	2000	2010	% change	2000	2010	% change
	Count	Count		Count	Count		Count	Count		Count	Count		Count	Count		Count	Count	
BOSTON	44,280	55,028	+24.3%	140,305	138,072	-1.6%	85,089	107,917	+26.8%	291,561	290,310	-0.4%	9,732	11,305	+16.2%	18,174	14,959	-21.5%
Allston/Brighton	9,123	10,313	+13.0%	2,997	3,049	+1.7%	6,125	6,793	+10.9%	45,582	44,001	-3.5%	910	1,126	+23.7%	1,730	1,583	-9.3%
Back Bay <sup>2</sup>	4,275	5,039	+17.9%	2,381	2,350	-1.3%	1,780	2,582	+45.1%	37,232	39,014	+4.8%	187	231	+23.5%	649	801	+19.0%
Charlestown	761	1,344	+76.6%	539	764	+41.7%	1,764	1,591	-9.8%	11,946	12,458	+4.3%	46	80	+73.9%	139	202	+31.2%
Dorchester (zip codes 02121, 02125)	3,855	3,934	+2.0%	28,030	26,085	-6.9%	10,246	13,418	+31.0%	10,659	10,157	-4.7%	2843	3,401	+19.6%	3,042	2,278	-33.5%
Dorchester (zip codes 02122, 02124)	6,230	6,997	+12.3%	35,156	32,605	-7.3%	8,913	10,471	+17.5%	19,367	16,152	-16.6%	2282	2,558	+12.1%	3,381	2,479	-36.4%
East Boston	1,553	1,413	-9.0%	1,177	1,283	+9.0%	14,990	21,419	+42.9%	19,078	15,051	-21.1%	511	724	+41.7%	1,104	618	-78.6%
Fenway	6,469	9,425	+45.7%	3,177	3,176	-0.0%	3,866	4,922	+27.3%	32,332	35,313	+9.2%	326	258	-20.9%	1,279	1,471	+13.1%
Hyde Park	453	499	+10.2%	9,211	12,338	+33.9%	3,796	6,351	+67.3%	13,861	8,408	-39.3%	191	295	+54.5%	880	597	-47.4%
Jamaica Plain	1,867	1,829	-2.0%	5,052	4,253	-15.8%	9,025	7,983	-11.5%	19,205	20,209	+5.2%	225	251	+11.6%	919	876	-4.9%
Mattapan	265	218	-17.7%	22,768	20,555	-9.7%	1,985	2,978	+50.0%	1,328	959	-27.8%	205	241	+17.6%	1,264	611	-106.9%
Roslindale	853	796	-6.7%	5,360	6,342	+18.3%	6,553	7,738	+18.1%	18,473	14,034	-24.0%	204	273	+33.8%	1,084	643	-68.6%
Roxbury	1,059	2,045	+93.1%	17,705	16,785	-5.2%	8,464	10,938	+29.2%	4,681	8,202	+75.2%	1388	1,356	-2.3%	1,368	1,201	-13.9%
South Boston	1,178	1,675	+42.2%	749	1,574	+110.1%	2,298	3,354	+46.0%	25,333	26,704	+5.4%	121	176	+45.5%	369	406	+9.1%
South End <sup>3</sup>	5,358	7,188	+34.2%	5,505	5,338	-3.0%	4,451	5,255	+18.1%	11,165	15,249	+36.6%	194	195	+0.5%	638	656	+2.7%
West Roxbury	981	1,642	+67.4%	498	1,283	+157.6%	833	1,754	+110.6%	21,319	20,681	-3.0%	99	110	+11.1%	328	391	+16.1%

<sup>1</sup> Includes American Indians/Alaskan Natives and individuals who identify as some other race<sup>2</sup> Includes Beacon Hill, Downtown, the North End, and the West End<sup>3</sup> Includes the zip code typically used to identify Chinatown (02111)

DATA SOURCE: Decennial Censuses 2000 and 2010, U.S. Census Bureau



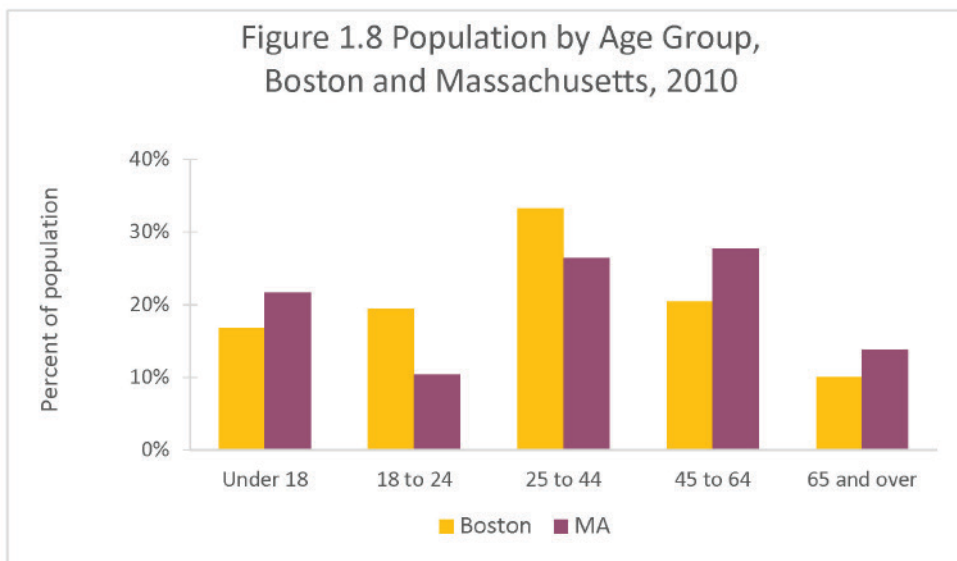
Figure 1.7 Majority Racial/Ethnic Group  
by Census Tract, Boston, 2010



In the neighborhoods of Allston/Brighton, Back Bay, Charlestown, Fenway, Jamaica Plain, South Boston, the South End, and West Roxbury, White residents made up more than 50% of the population in most census tracts. In Mattapan, Black residents made up more than 50% of the population in all census tracts.

Majority-Black-resident census tracts were also concentrated in the neighborhoods of Dorchester (zip codes 02121, 02125), Dorchester (zip codes 02122, 02124), and Roxbury. Latino residents made up more than 50% of the population in the majority of census tracts in East Boston. Asian residents made up more than 50% of the population in 2 census tracts in the South End.

In 2010, Boston had a higher percentage of adults ages 18-24 and 25-44 compared with Massachusetts. Compared with Boston, a higher percentage of residents in Massachusetts were under age 18 or over age 44.

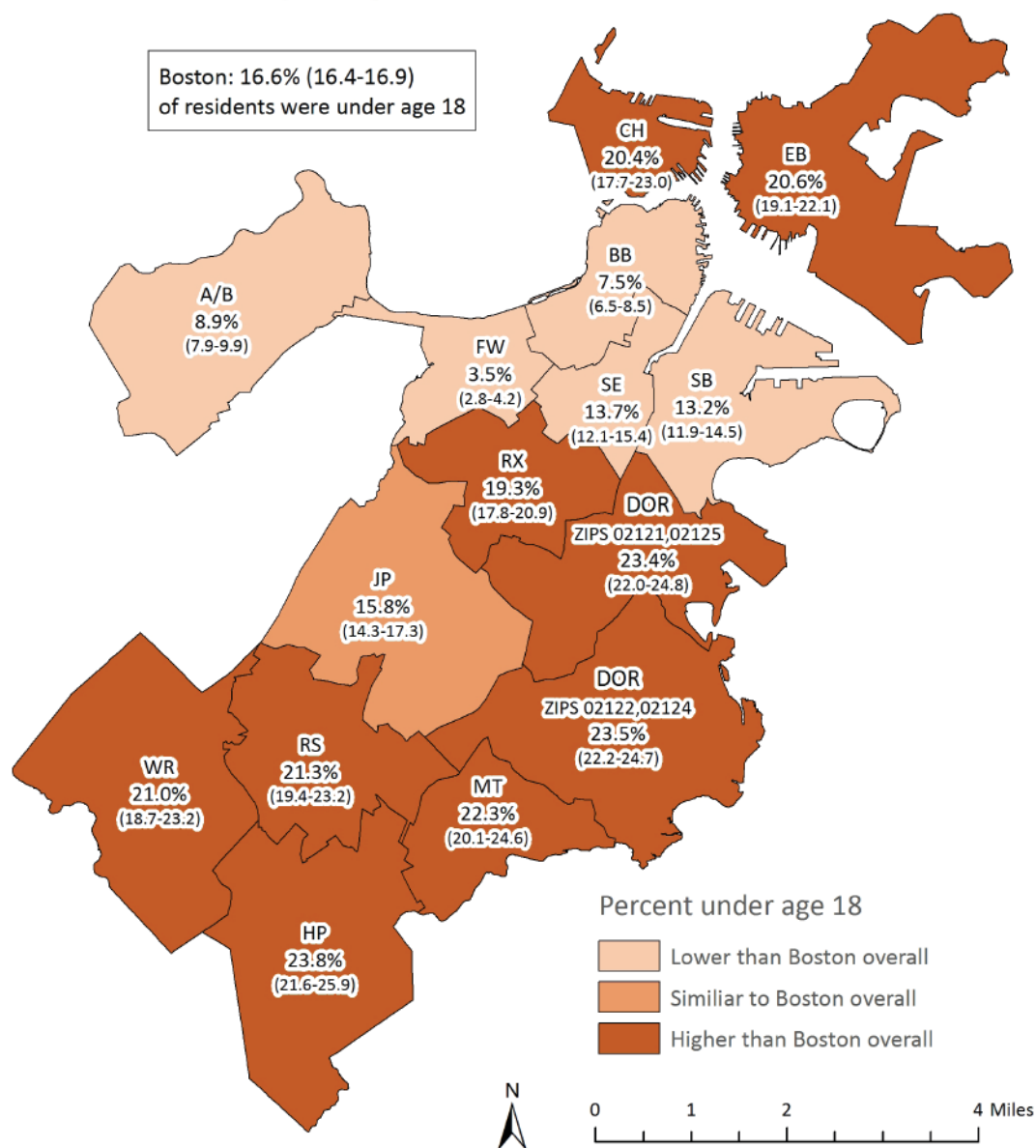


DATA SOURCE: Decennial Census 2010, U.S. Census Bureau





Figure 1.9 Population Under Age 18  
by Neighborhood, 2011-2015



NOTE: "BB" includes the Back Bay, Beacon Hill, Downtown, the North End, and the West End.  
"SE" includes the South End and Chinatown.

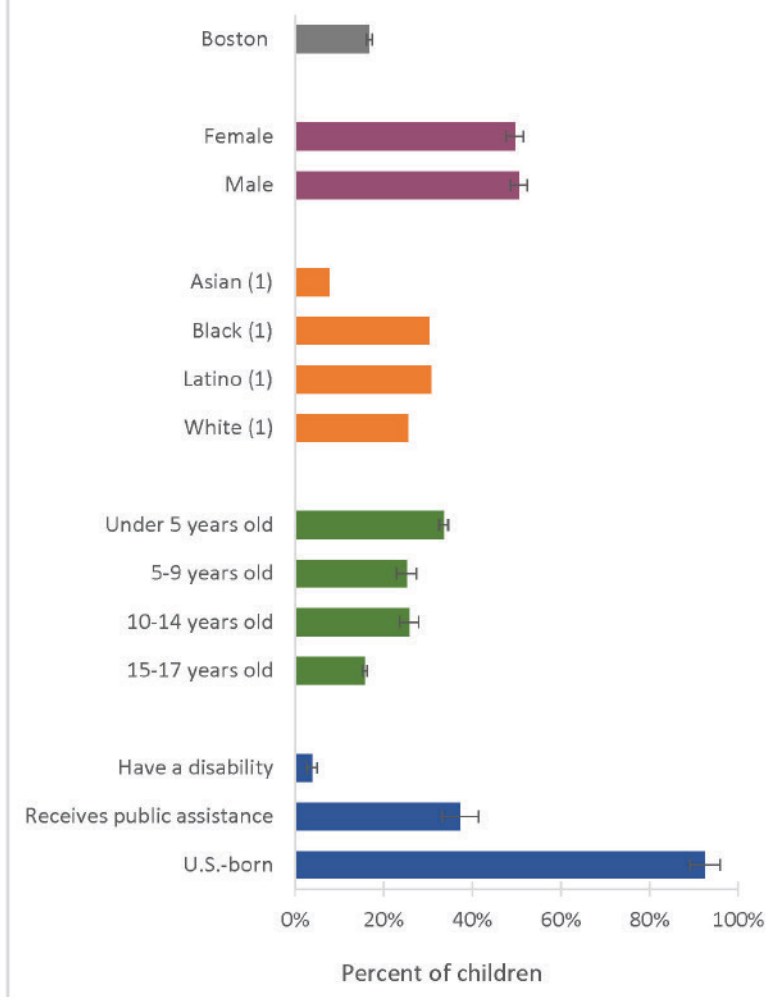
DATA SOURCE: American Community Survey, 2011-2015, U.S. Census Bureau

During 2011-2015, 17% of Boston residents were under age 18. Compared with Boston overall, Charlestown, Dorchester (zip codes 02121, 02125), Dorchester (zip codes 02122, 02124), East Boston, Hyde Park, Mattapan, Roslindale, Roxbury, and West Roxbury had a higher percentage of residents under age 18. Allston/Brighton, Back Bay, Fenway, South Boston, and the South End had a lower percentage of residents under age 18 compared with Boston overall.

In 2015, 17% of Boston residents were younger than 18 years of age. Of the children in Boston, 31% were Latino, 30% were Black, 25% were White, and 8% were Asian. Children younger than 5 years of age made up the greatest percentage of children (34%).

Regarding other indicators, 93% of Boston children were born in the United States, 37% received public assistance, and 4% had a disability.

Figure 1.10 Children by Selected Indicators, 2015

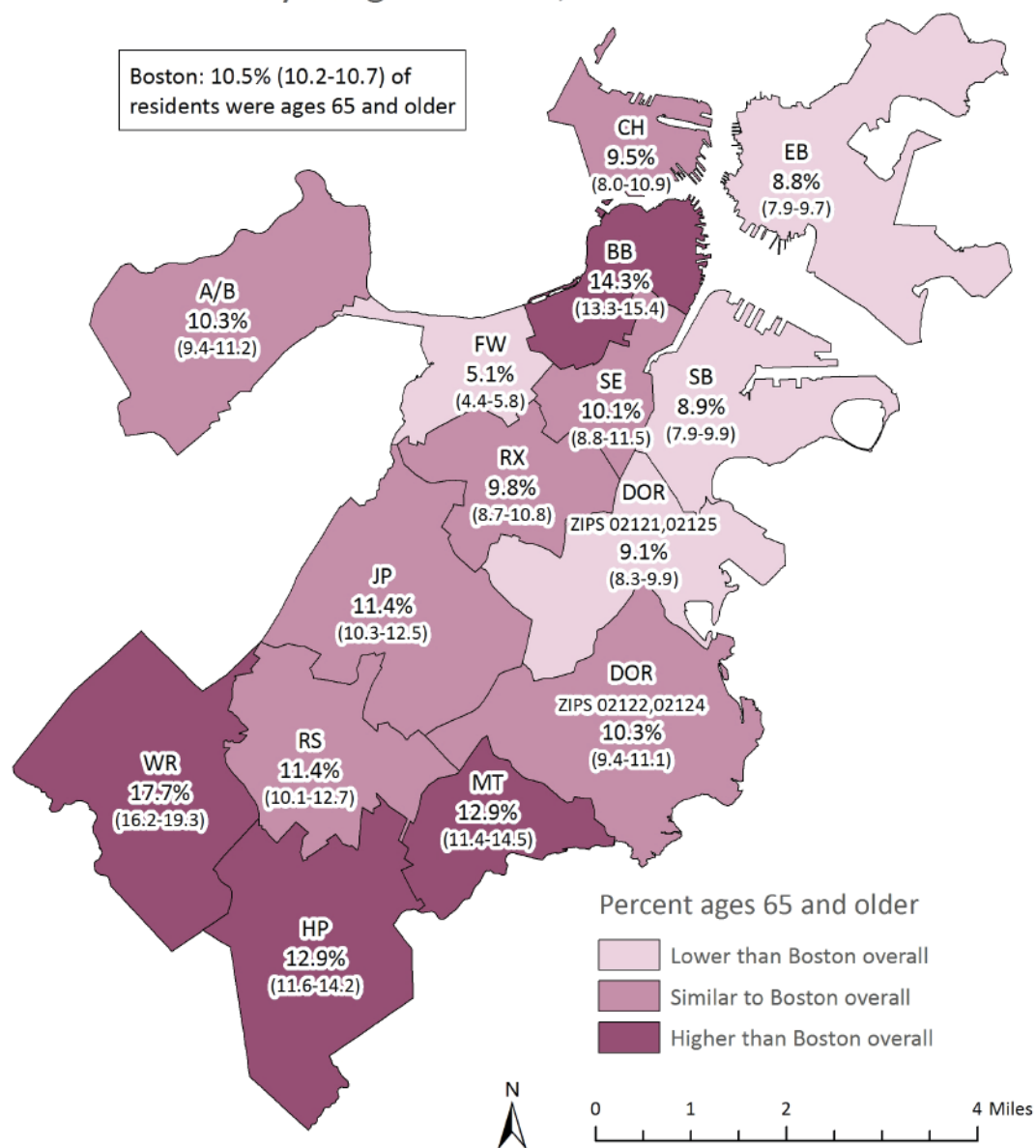


(1) Due to limited information, confidence intervals for each racial/ethnic group could not be calculated and are therefore not available.

DATA SOURCE: American Community Survey, 2015, U.S. Census Bureau



Figure 1.11 Population Ages 65 and Older  
by Neighborhood, 2011-2015



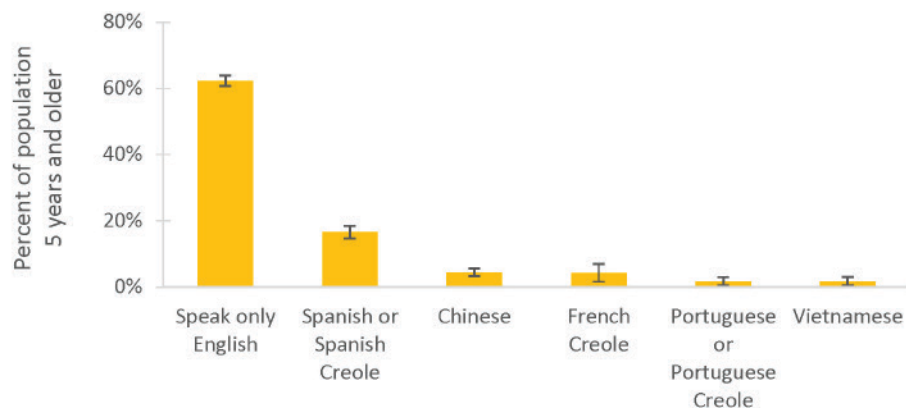
NOTE: "BB" includes the Back Bay, Beacon Hill, Downtown, the North End, and the West End.  
"SE" includes the South End and Chinatown.

DATA SOURCE: American Community Survey, 2011-2015, U.S. Census Bureau

During 2011-2015, 11% of Boston residents were ages 65 and older. Compared with Boston overall, Back Bay, Hyde Park, Mattapan, and West Roxbury had a higher percentage of residents ages 65 and older. Dorchester (zip codes 02121, 02125), East Boston, Fenway, and South Boston had a lower percentage of residents ages 65 and older compared with Boston overall.

While English was the language most frequently spoken at home in 2015, 38% of Boston residents ages 5 and older spoke a language other than English at home (data not shown). Spanish (including Spanish Creole) was spoken at home by 17% of residents, while 5% spoke Chinese, 4% spoke French Creole, 2% spoke Vietnamese, and another 2% spoke Portuguese or Portuguese Creole.

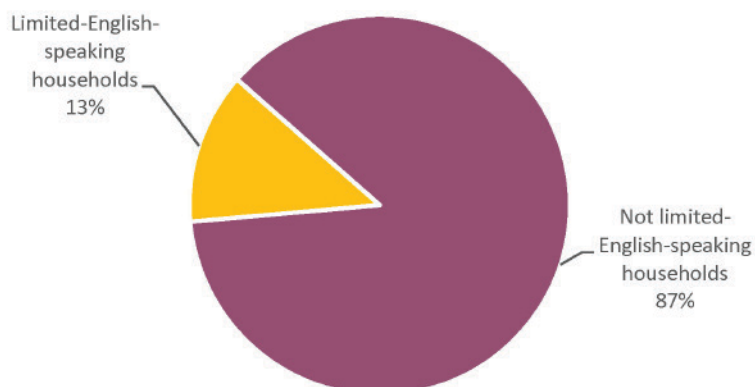
Figure 1.12 Languages Most Frequently Spoken at Home, 2015



DATA SOURCE: American Community Survey, 2015, U.S. Census Bureau

In 2015, 13% of Boston households were considered limited-English-speaking households. A limited-English-speaking household is defined as a household in which no member ages 14 and older a) speaks only English or b) speaks a non-English language and speaks English "very well." This can also be viewed as households where all members ages 14 and older have at least some difficulty with English.

Figure 1.13 English Speaking Among Households, 2015



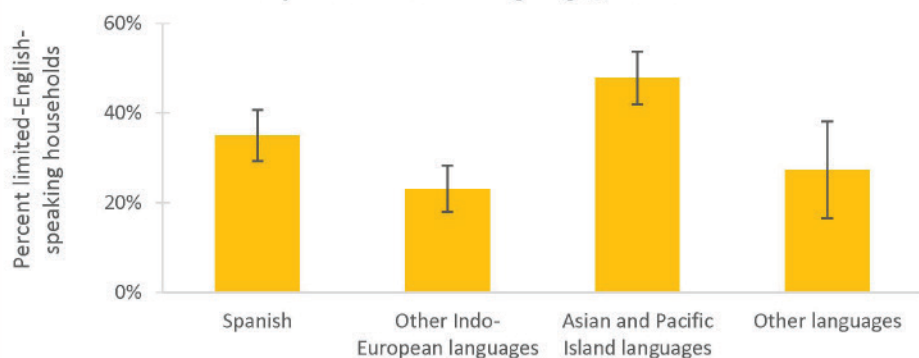
NOTE: See appendix for confidence intervals for point estimates.

DATA SOURCE: American Community Survey, 2015, U.S. Census Bureau





Figure 1.14 Limited-English-Speaking Households by Household Language, 2015

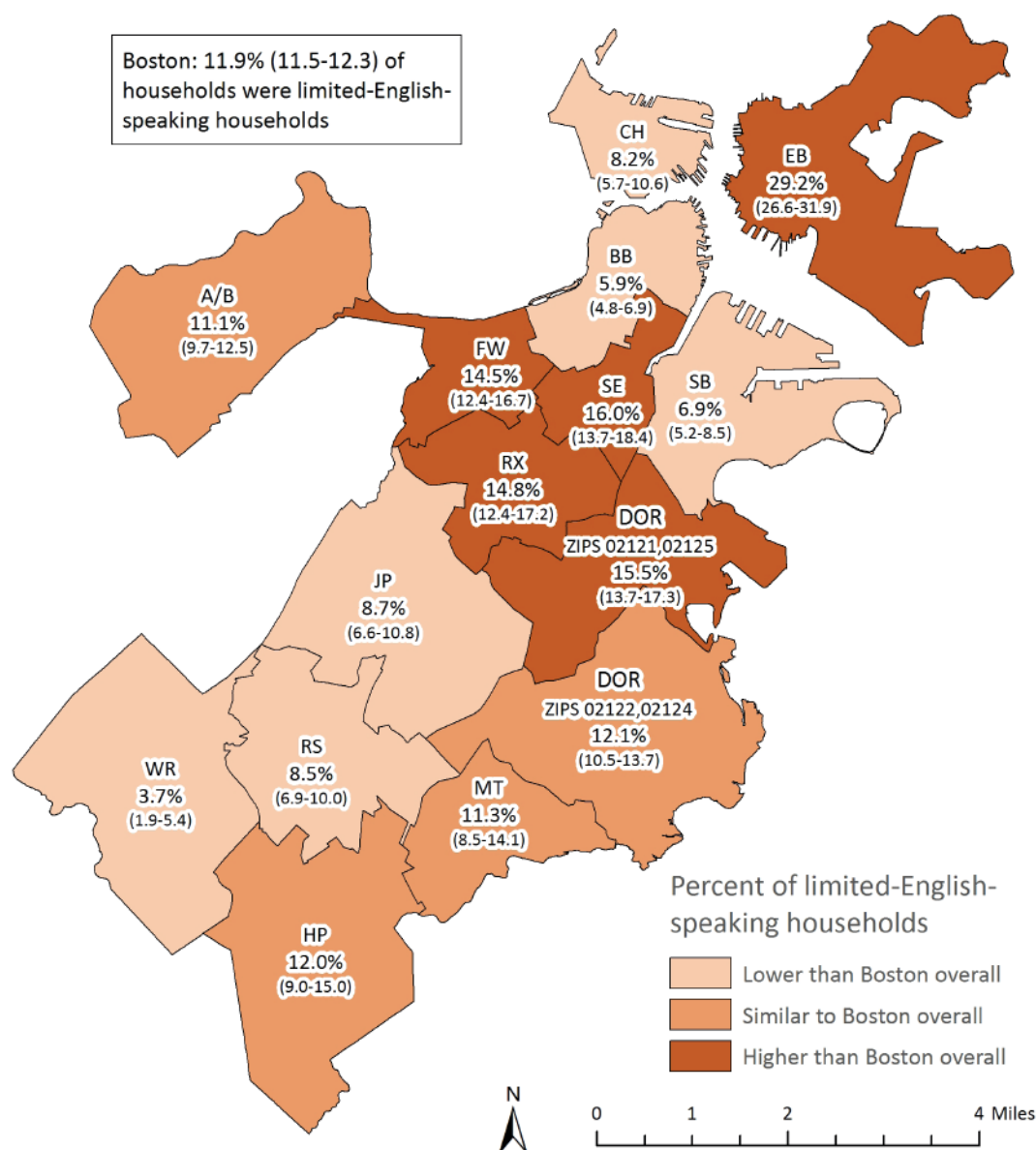


NOTE: Other Indo-European languages include English-based Pidgin Creole languages, Germanic, Romance (excluding Spanish), Celtic, Slavic, Baltic, Iranian, and Indic languages.

DATA SOURCE: American Community Survey, 2015, U.S. Census Bureau

In 2015, 35% of Spanish-speaking households were limited-English-speaking households, 23% of households that spoke other Indo-European languages were limited-English-speaking households, 48% of households that spoke Asian or Pacific Island languages were limited-English-speaking households, and 27% of households that spoke other languages were limited-English-speaking households.

Figure 1.15 Limited-English-Speaking Households  
by Neighborhood, 2011-2015



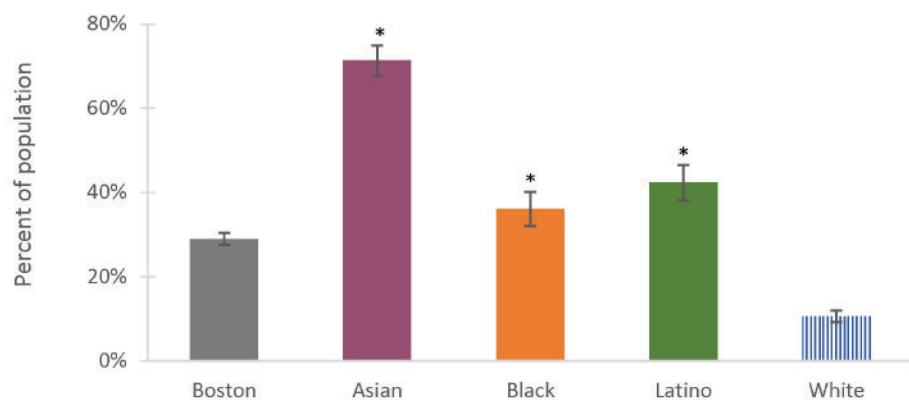
NOTE: "BB" includes the Back Bay, Beacon Hill, Downtown, the North End, and the West End.  
"SE" includes the South End and Chinatown.

DATA SOURCE: American Community Survey, 2011-2015, U.S. Census Bureau

During 2011-2015, 12% of Boston households were considered limited-English-speaking households. Compared with Boston overall, a higher percentage of households in Dorchester (zip codes 02121, 02125), East Boston, Fenway, Roxbury, and the South End were limited-English-speaking households. A lower percentage of households in Back Bay, Charlestown, Jamaica Plain, Roslindale, South Boston, and West Roxbury were limited-English-speaking households compared with Boston overall.



Figure 1.16 Foreign-Born Status by Race/Ethnicity, 2015



In 2015, 29% of Boston residents were foreign-born. A higher percentage of Asian (71%), Black (36%), and Latino (42%) residents were foreign-born compared with White residents (11%).

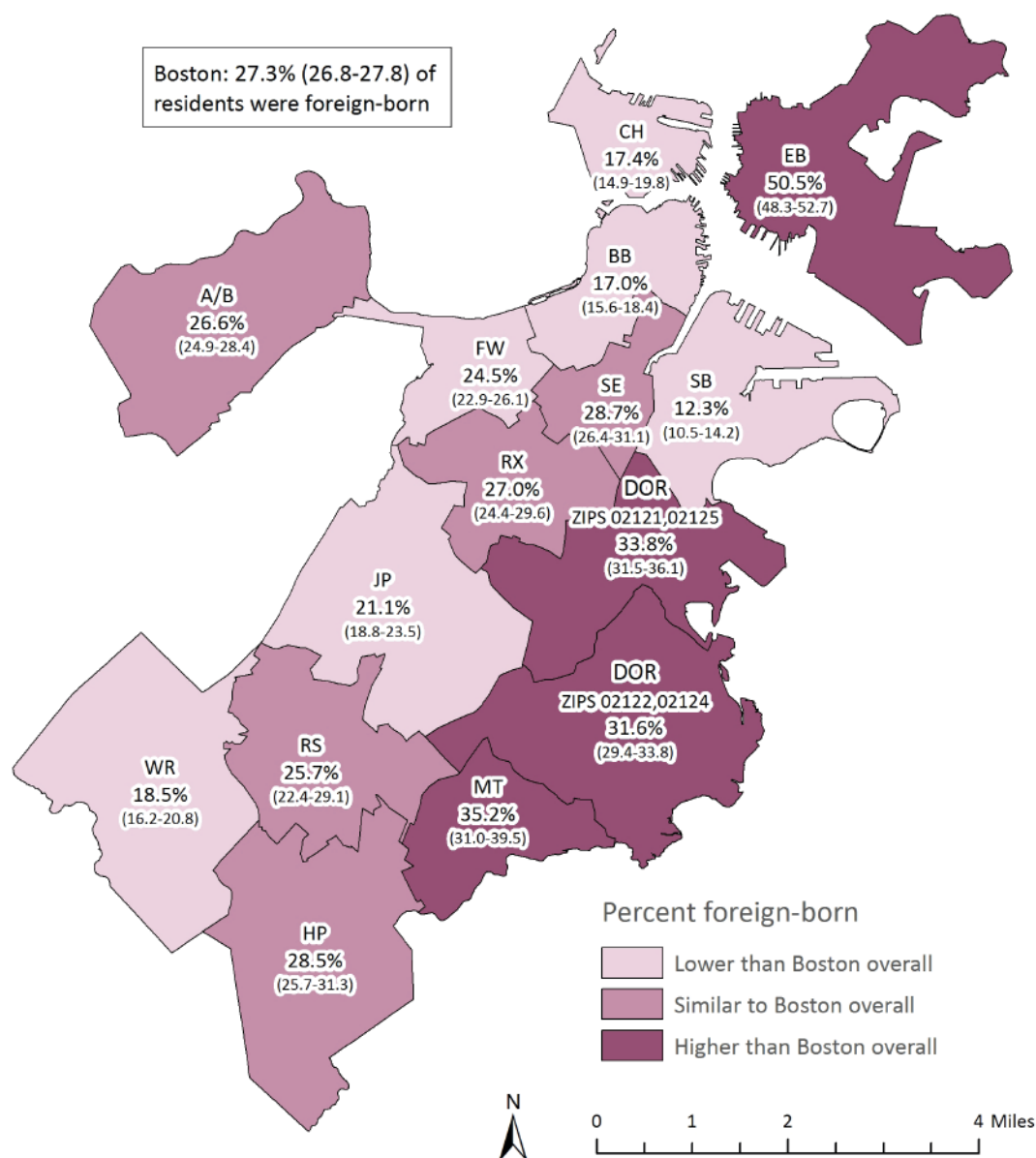
\* Statistically significant difference when comparisons are made between racial/ethnic groups

NOTE: Bars with patterns indicate the reference group within each selected indicator.

DATA SOURCE: American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample, 2015, U.S. Census Bureau



Figure 1.17 Foreign-Born Status  
by Neighborhood, 2011-2015



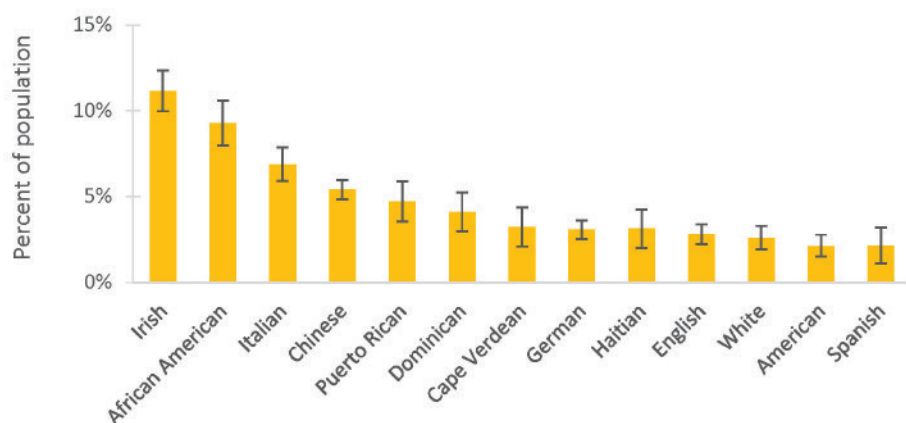
NOTE: "BB" includes the Back Bay, Beacon Hill, Downtown, the North End, and the West End.  
"SE" includes the South End and Chinatown.

DATA SOURCE: American Community Survey, 2011-2015, U.S. Census Bureau

During 2011-2015, 27% of Boston residents were foreign-born. Compared with Boston overall, a higher percentage of residents in Dorchester (zip codes 02121, 02125), Dorchester (zip codes 02122, 02124), East Boston, and Mattapan were foreign-born. A lower percentage of residents in Back Bay, Charlestown, Fenway, Jamaica Plain, South Boston, and West Roxbury were foreign-born compared with Boston residents overall.



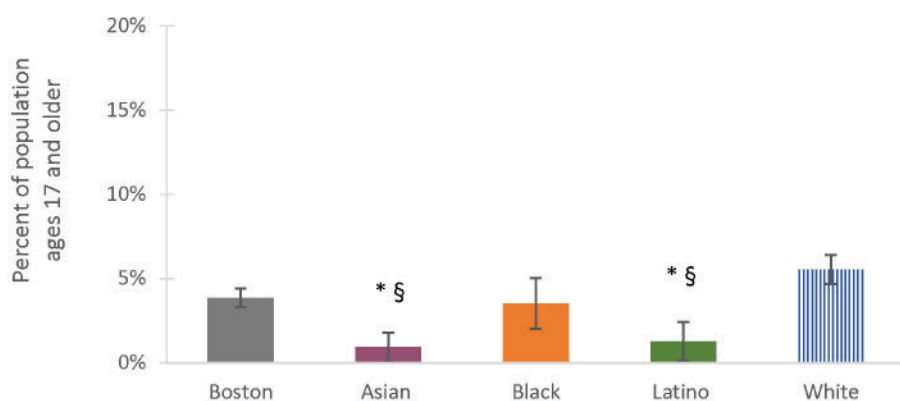
Figure 1.18 Ancestry Among Boston Residents, 2015



In 2015, the most commonly reported ancestries among Boston residents were Irish (11%), African American (9%), Italian (7%), Chinese (5%), and Puerto Rican (5%).

DATA SOURCE: American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample, 2015, U.S. Census Bureau

Figure 1.19 Active Duty Status by Race/Ethnicity, 2015



In 2015, 4% of Boston residents ages 17 and older reported ever serving on active duty in the military. A lower percentage of Asian (1%) and Latino (1%) residents ever served on active duty compared with White residents (6%).

\* Statistically significant difference when comparisons are made between racial/ethnic groups  
 § Estimates have a coefficient of variation greater than or equal to 30% and should be interpreted with caution.

NOTE: Bars with patterns indicate the reference group within each selected indicator.

DATA SOURCE: American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample, 2015, U.S. Census Bureau

## Summary

With its many colleges and universities, it is not surprising that in 2010, Boston was home to a higher percentage of adults ages 18-44 compared with Massachusetts and the U.S. overall. However, Boston's population has both grown and diversified over time. Between 2000 and 2010, the overall population increased by 5%. Among neighborhoods, Chinatown, the South End, and Roxbury experienced the greatest increases in population growth, while Dorchester (zip codes 02122, 02124), Roslindale, and Mattapan experienced the greatest decreases. From 2000-2015, the percentage of Asian and Latino residents increased, while the percentage of Black and White residents decreased. In 2015, the majority of residents were non-White, and nearly 30% of the population was foreign-born, which was higher than the national and state percentages. Among limited-English-speaking households in Boston, Spanish and Asian languages were the most commonly spoken languages other than English. The increasing diversity of the Boston population is exemplified among children less than 18 years of age, who made up approximately 17% of all Boston residents in 2015. This age group was comprised predominantly of Black and Latino children. More than a third of children less than 18 years of age are in families that received public assistance in 2015. This percentage (37%) was higher than the national average.

Although Boston is an increasingly diverse city, it remains segregated, and differences in sociodemographic characteristics can be seen at both the neighborhood and census tract level. Majority-Black-resident census tracts were concentrated in the neighborhoods of Dorchester (zip codes 02121, 02125), Dorchester (zip codes 02122, 02124), Mattapan, and Roxbury. Latino residents made up most of the population in many census tracts in East Boston, while certain census tracts in the South End had mostly Asian residents. Compared with Boston overall, a higher percentage of households in Dorchester (zip codes 02121, 02125), East Boston, Fenway, Roxbury, and the South End were limited-English-speaking households and a higher percentage of residents in Dorchester (zip codes 02121, 02125), Dorchester (zip codes 02122, 02124), East Boston, and Mattapan were foreign-born.

# Demographics

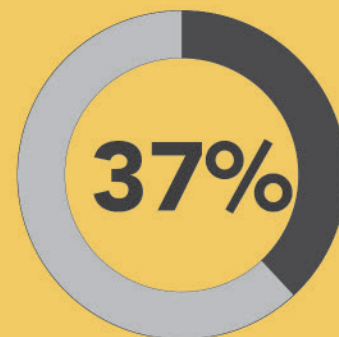
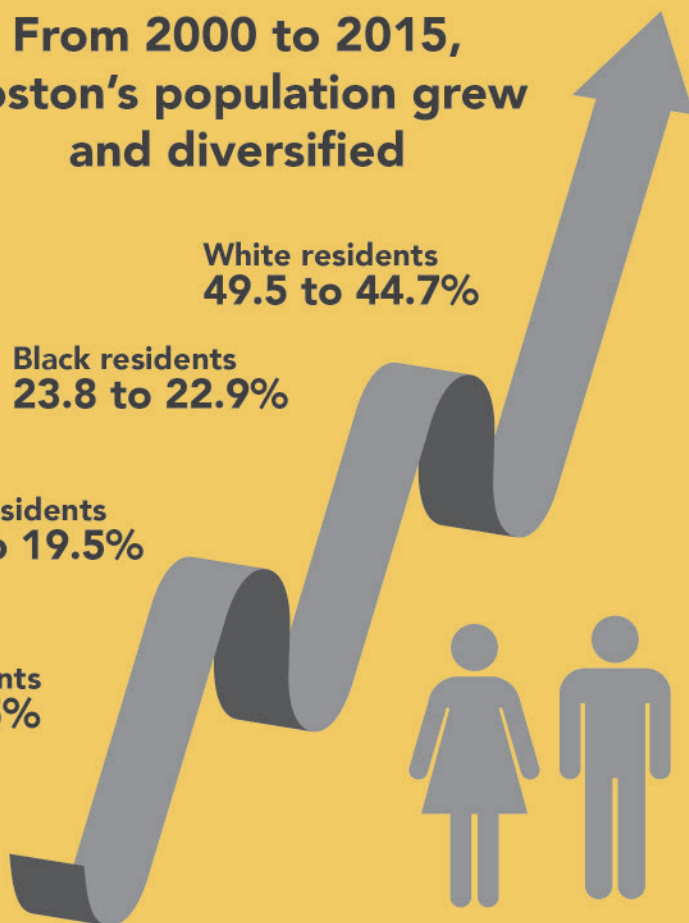
**From 2000 to 2015,  
Boston's population grew  
and diversified**

**White residents  
49.5 to 44.7%**

**Black residents  
23.8 to 22.9%**

**Latino residents  
14.4 to 19.5%**

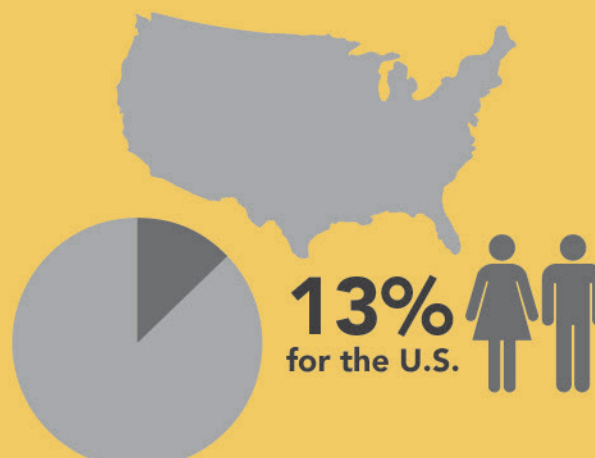
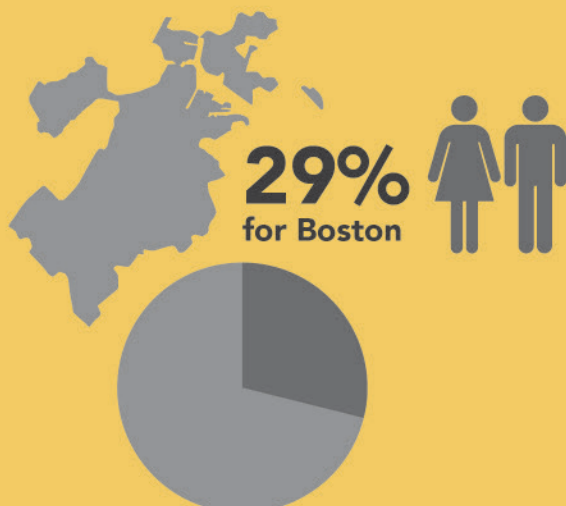
**Asian residents  
7.5 to 9.5%**



**of children  
less than  
18 years of age  
were in families  
that received  
public assistance  
in 2015**



## Foreign-born population in 2015





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